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The City On The Edge Of Forever



Synopsis

The original teleplay that became the classic Star Trek episode, with an expanded introductory essay by Harlan Ellison, *The City on the Edge of Forever* has been surrounded by controversy since the airing of an "eviscerated" version - which subsequently has been voted the most beloved episode in the series' history. In its original form, *The City on the Edge of Forever* won the 1966-67 Writers Guild of America Award for Best Teleplay. As aired, it won the 1967 Hugo Award. *The City on the Edge of Forever* is, at its most basic, a poignant love story. Ellison takes the listener on a breathtaking trip through space and time, from the future all the way back to 1930s America. In this harrowing journey, Kirk and Spock race to apprehend a renegade criminal and restore the order of the universe. It is here that Kirk faces his ultimate dilemma: a choice between the universe - and his one true love. This edition makes available the astonishing teleplay as Ellison intended it to be aired. The author's introductory essay reveals all of the details of what Ellison describes as a "fatally inept treatment" of his creative work. Was he unjustly edited, unjustly accused, and unjustly treated? For a full cast/character list and table of contents, please visit www.SkyboatMedia.com.

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Customer Reviews

This book is divided into three parts. The first part is an extremely long, bile-filled introductory essay from the pen of author Harlan Ellison. The second part, and the meat of the text, is the actual script treatments of *CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER*, with two additional revised scenes at the end written after Gene Roddenberry (Star Trek's creator and executive producer) insisted that certain elements of the story be removed or changed. The final part is a collection of afterwords written by

various people to have worked with Ellison over the years, particularly those who were familiar with the conflict between himself and Gene Roddenberry - the Great Bird Of The Galaxy. Harlan Ellison's introductory essay is a delightful, 72-page, no-holds-barred rant concerning the circumstances behind the Original Star Trek episode, CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER. The essay, filled with some of the most creative insults you'll see this side of a Don Rickles' act, is easily worth the price of admission by itself. In it, Ellison starts at the very beginning, painstakingly detailing the events behind the writing of the script, continues through the fights during the production and then screams about everything that took place after the show had ended. Ellison includes numerous photocopies of damning documents that build a very convincing case for his side of the argument. It's laughable the number of things that Gene Roddenberry thought he could get away with saying at Star Trek conventions. My favourite is that Roddenberry would state during a speech that Harlan Ellison "had my Scotty dealing drugs!

Harlan Ellison's bitter introductory essay is the absolute finest reason to buy this book. He handily deconstructs the myth that has been Gene Roddenberry in a literate, angry rant that makes the reader almost experience a vein-throbbing aneurysm as an act of pure empathy. I myself had to be hospitalized for several days after exposure to his acidic version of what went down. That having been said, I'm still a fan of the televised version of The City on the Edge of Forever and I think it was an improvement on Ellison's original draft. The number one reason is (as D.C. Fontana points out in her afterword) that Ellison's script just wasn't very series television friendly. The City and the Guardians as originally envisioned by Ellison could have never been delivered to his satisfaction given the special effects/makeup limitations of the time and would have been a legitimate budgetary concern. Personally, I think it was a stroke of genius to make the Guardian actually BE the gateway and substituting the original antagonist of the drug-dealing Beckwith (what's the street value on a Jewel of Sound, by the way?) with the accidentally doped-up but otherwise decent Dr. McCoy simply made more sense from a TV standpoint. Ellison's addition (okay, okay at Roddenberry's insistence) of space pirates came off as silly and the Enterprise simply ceasing to exist was certainly more profound than having them turn into a ship full of buccaneers. What I find incredibly interesting in the reading of Ellison's essay and the various afterwords are the unanimous suggestions that Roddenberry wanted HIS Starfleet people to be portrayed as perfect and uncorrupt while refusing to address the many episodes made under Roddenberry's supervision that depicted imperfect and corrupt Starfleet personnel.

For more than thirty years now, controversy has raged over the fan favorite Star Trek episode, "City on the Edge of Forever." Here, Ellison gives us the story of his script, how it was written, then rewritten numerous times, finally to the point where he disavowed it, trying to put his nom de plume, Cordwainer Bird as author. The book, which starts as an interesting piece of, if not Trekker lore, television behind the scenes, quickly becomes a (likely justified) character assassination of Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry. Plenty of evidence is presented to prove the claims of dishonesty by Roddenberry against not only Ellison, but other creators. "City" is not the first tome to assert Roddenberry's credit stealing or lack of writing ability (although it has never been put so succinctly as when Ellison says Roddenberry, "couldn't write worth sour owl poop.") In three separate interviews printed here, Roddenberry claims that Ellison's script was unfilmable for two reasons. One, he had several crewmen acting out of character and two he was over budget. Taking these one at a time, Roddenberry was actually quoted as saying, "He [Ellison] had my Scotty dealing drugs!" Scotty does not appear on the script anywhere. Several times Roddenberry had apologized for his mistake, but he never seemed to stop making it. Although Scotty was not dealing drugs, another character created just for this episode, Lt. Beckwith, is dealing in Jewels of Sound, a sonic narcotic. Roddenberry objected to having any of his perfect crew showing such poor character. Perhaps this was Roddenberry's complaint, and not defamation of Scotty, but Starfleet officers in general, whom Roddenberry never wanted to show with conflicts or flaws.

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